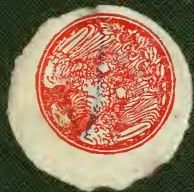


SONG-CAPTIVES

BY

JOHN ALBERT WILSON.



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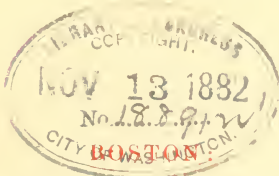
BY

JOHN ALBERT WILSON,

AUTHOR OF "THE PARADOX AND OTHER POEMS," ETC., ETC.

*"I have but marked the place,
But half the secret told,
That, following this slight trace,
Others may find the gold."*

LONGFELLOW — *"In the Harbor."*



A. WILLIAMS AND COMPANY.

Old Corner Bookstore.

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Boston Dec. 24th 1877

My dear Sir

Accept my thanks for
your Christmas gift of your
little volume of poems. I cannot
wait until I have done them
full justice before thanking you,
but I have read enough to see
that you have put liberal
thought and generous sentiment
into them which I hope will
make them acceptable to the
class of readers you most desire.

Very truly Yours
W. H. Holmes

With best wishes for
its success

Yours truly
Henry W. Longfellow

To Broadway, N. Y. City
Feb 2^d 1879

My dear Sir:

I keep a close eye upon our
literature, & already had seen your
very thoughtful & earnest poems - and
am glad to have the volume containing
"The Paradox" upon my own shelves. There
is nothing weak & trivial about that
poem; & such an idyl is "political"
shows that its author has the true gifts
of eye, ear, & imagination.

Very sincerely yrs.

Edmund C. Stedman.

W. J. Albert Wilson.

PREFACE.

THE very flattering reception accorded to my first book of poems, five years ago, must be my excuse for the publication of a second volume. Poetry is my pastime, not my vocation, and these "Captives" are the spoils of occasional excursions, on this continent and abroad, at periods when overwork in an arduous profession has compelled rest and change of scene. I am deeply conscious of their many defects; I would they were more worthy; but, such as they are, I free them to the world.

SONG-CAPTIVES.

SONG-CAPTIVES.

PRELUDE.

I CANNOT sing them as I would —
The melodies that thrill my soul;
I cannot paint the wondrous whole —
My vision — and esteem it good.

As he who wanders forth at morn
To snare God's messengers of song,
At eve is shamed to own the wrong,
Or show his victims — plumage-torn.

So, half-reluctantly, I bear
These trembling captives in my hand;
Mere shadows from the vision-land,
Faint echoes of the songs I hear.

Cambridge, Mass., March 1, 1882.

SOLITUDE.

A SUMMER IDYL.

How sweet to leave the bustle of the town,
And wander thro' the woodlands all alone :
To mark the mellow sunbeams drifting down
Through hanging boughs, while, like a loose
veil thrown,
High over all is seen the azure sky's majestic
dome.

What myriad, myriad voices in the air,
Shrill, tiny voices, hailing as I pass ;
A ceaseless hum which greets me everywhere,
The very leaves seem vocal, and the grass
For rapturous joy is fain, each blade, all
others to surpass.

The drowsy locust, hymning as he goes,
The merry cricket, and the amorous bee ;
The humming-bird, who lingers o'er the rose
One instant only, then away doth flee,
Midst other charms to wanton, and still
other scenes to see.

Like far-off echoes from the land of dreams,
I hear the distant bleating of the flocks ;
The watch-dog's bark, while yet more distant
seems
The measured striking of the village
clocks,
And angry clarion challenges rehearsed by
rival cocks.

The babbling brooklet in its pebbly bed,
A tortuous course with rippling murmur
weaves ;
The gentle wood-doves cooing overhead,

The voiceless rhythm of the falling leaves,
And all the countless sounds unheard which
yet the mind perceives.

How calm the aspect of yon purple hills,
Which brood, and brood, and brood forever-
more ;

Forever brooding. O ! my spirit thrills
With eager longing for their hidden store
Of secret knowledge, and their mystic leg-
endary lore.

For they have brooded thus for countless years,
Aye, brooded thus ere Time his course
began ;

Unmoved, have marked the flood of human
fears,

And human hopes, which crowd life's little
span ;

Have heard unmoved, the last faint piping
of the insect man.

Forever waiting still they seem to be,
Forever waiting for we know not what :
An awful sense of mighty mystery,
Of something yet to come, or something that
Hath passed beyond our ken, which was,
but now is not.

Like mighty giants, limned against the sky,
Each monstrous bulk upheaves from out the
plain ;
All motionless, in endless sleep they lie,
Nor babble of the secrets they retain
Within their rock-ribbed bosoms, ever probed
by man in vain.

Like mighty giants of some elder day,
They seem no part or parcel of our time ;
Nor heed unto the present ever pay,
But slumber on in attitude sublime ;
Girt by their leafy beards, and capp'd with
hoary rime.

The rise and fall of empires is to them
No more than fate of yonder leaflet blown ;
They ne'er have bow'd to kingly diadem,
Nor spurned the neck of despot overthrown ;
Nor ever wept to hear the dying patriot's
plaintive moan.

And yonder river, with its ceaseless flow
Of placid waters, rolling to the sea ;
Hath seen alike, unmoved, all human woe,
All human joy ; unmoved, hath heard for aye
The victor's cry of triumph mock the van-
quished's agony.

Or crystal pure as dew-drop at the birth ;
Or gore ensanguined from some mortal fray
Upon his banks ; or thick with clayey earth
Washed from the mountain's side ; he wends
his way,
As calmly now, as poured the flood which
marked his natal day.

Alike to him the Indian's frail canoe
 Freighted with furs ; or, rich with many a
 bale,
Our modern argosies ; or deep with woe,
 The slaver's keel ; or yacht with snowy sail ;
 Or steamship swift ; or warlike squadrons
 clad in iron mail.

Or yet more distant in the lapse of years
 His flood hath roll'd, — a long forgotten
 race,
Cultured and strong ; whose handiwork still
 bears
 Mute witness, — they, like us, once filled a
 space
 In Time's great album, but have passed, and
 left but scanty trace.

And in the distant future, may not we,
 Who vaunt our modern culture, modern
 thought,

Mouldered to dust, like them, forgotten be ;

Our very name a blank, — unknown, unsought,

Or sought in vain, — the crumbling relics
that our hands have wrought ?

O ! may this thought, borne constantly in
mind,

Still serve to check our pride from day to
day : —

Life is a leaf, fann'd by the passing wind

A season only, then to fade away ;

To join the myriads gone before, and share
their swift decay.

ASPIRATION.

WHEN the shades of night are falling,
When the whip-poor-will is calling,
When the last faint tints are fading from the
 gateways of the West —
Then, impelled by eager yearning,
All my soul within me burning,
Still I wander through the gloaming like a spirit
 of unrest.

In the moonlight, in the shadow,
Over mountain, over meadow,
Through the forest dark and lonely now I wend
 my wistful way ;
Onward, onward still I wander,
To the distant churchyard yonder,
Where the dead of many centuries are mould-
 ering into clay.

Here, like ocean wavelet swelling,
Lies each circumscribèd dwelling,
All uncultured and uncared for, with rank net-
tles overgrown ;
Full weary am I gleaning
Or the wording or the meaning
Of the time-effaced inscription on each ivy-cov-
ered stone.

Yet these lived, and loved, and mated ;
Yet these feared, despised, and hated ;
Yet these quaffed the cup of happiness and
drank the dregs of woe ;
Yet these wondered as I've wondered ;
Yet these pondered as I've pondered —
Pondered o'er the great life-problem, in the
ages long ago.

We are gods ! We question therefore :
Suffering, death, and sorrow — wherefore ?

We are beasts ! Then why this yearning for a
higher, purer life ?
Gods, or beasts, or both, I know not —
Gods, or beasts, or both, I trow not —
But I know there wages evermore a fierce, re-
lentless strife.

There are hours of soul-awaking,
When, these earthly fetters breaking,
My soul springs up triumphant, and affirms her
latent might ;
I can feel my spirit striving,
All the bonds of Nature riving —
I can feel the God within me struggling upward
toward the light.

Then I know, though born of woman,
I am something more than human ;
Then I know this flame within me with the fire
Divine is fraught.

Though Death ope his gloomy portal,
What care I? For I'm immortal!
I may beard him, and defy him! Oh, there's
rapture in the thought!

There is heavenly music ringing,
There are angel-voices singing,
There are spirit-fingers beckoning, ever beck-
oning me away;
Through my dreams they're floating ever;
Ah! full gladly would I sever
These galling bands that bind me to this tene-
ment of clay.

Père-la-Chaise, Paris, June 12, 1878.

THE UNATTAINABLE.

IN a dungeon of stone am I wall'd around,
With fetters of iron my limbs are bound ;
Vainly I seek for a ray of light,
But my eyes are wrapp'd in the pall of night.

Fain would I soar to the realms of day,
And plant my feet on the starry way ;
Fain would I pierce to the central throne,
And make my plaint to the Great Unknown.

Fain would I fathom the gloomy past,
And scatter the shadows the ages cast ;
To the outmost bounds of the future fly,
And know the decrees of Destiny.

I would probe the recesses of Nature's heart,
The breast of the universe rend apart ;
I would take my stand on the highest star,
And scan the horizon near and far.

On the gates of heaven I'd warfare wage,
And upon its battlements spend my rage ;
Nor ever I'd rest from my eager strife,
Till I knew the meaning of human life.

Till I knew the meaning of human woe,
The whence we come, the where we go ;
Till I learn'd the riddle whose answer lies
Enwrapp'd in eternal mysteries.

Alas ! I am here, — I know no more ;
Alas ! I am bound, — I may not soar ;
Alas ! I am blind, — I cannot see ;
And the riddle of life is unread by me.

Ah ! surely my spirit shall some time know
The things which it vainly seeks for now ;
Ah ! surely this heart shall some time bide
In peace, and its yearnings be satisfied.

LEGEND OF LURLEI.

Written while seated within the "Witch's Circle" at the summit of the celebrated "Lurlei Rock," on the Rhine, July 11, 1878. The ruined castle of Rhinefels lies about half a mile down the stream.

On the rock is Lurlei lying
All alone ;
For a faithless lover sighing,
Making moan ;
Watching still the Sun-God roaming
To the West ;
Watching him at evening-gloaming
Sink to rest ;
Marking now, from Dian's quiver
Flying fleet,
Silvery arrows pierce the river
At her feet.

Lurlei's heart is filled with sadness,
Waiting long ;
Lurlei's brain is thrilled with madness
For her wrong.

Rhinefels' castle frowneth grimly
On the steep ;
Rhinefels' turrets reflect dimly
In the deep ;
Rhinefels' cannon are the loudest
In the war ;
Rhinefels' name, it is the proudest
Near and far ;
Rhinefels' lord his faith hath plighted
To the maid ;
Rhinefels' lord that faith hath slighted
And betrayed.
Lurlei's heart is filled with sadness,
Waiting long ;
Lurlei's brain is thrilled with madness
For her wrong.

Strains of music sweetly ringing
Down the tide —
'Tis the lord of Rhinefels bringing
Home his bride.
See they not the stern avenger
Standing lone?
Hear they not the threatened danger
Toppling down?
'Neath the wave is Rhinefels sleeping
With his bride;
Still her watch is Lurlei keeping
O'er the tide.
Lurlei's heart is filled with sadness,
Waiting long;
Lurlei's brain is thrilled with madness
For her wrong.

IN THE WILD ARKANSAS WOOD.

IN the wild Arkansas wood,
 'Neath the pine-trees lying,
Naught to break my solitude,
 Save the zephyrs sighing ;
Save the robin's interlude,
 And his mate's replying.

Far away the city's hum,
 And I lonely ponder
Where the brown bear makes his home,
 Where the wild deer wander ;
Leaping squirrels slyly come,
 Gaze on me with wonder.

Slant the sunbeams, line on line,
Shadows interlacing ;
Moans the melancholy pine,
Branch with branch embracing ;
Faintly low the distant kine,
Homeward slowly pacing.

Mocking-birds with varied notes
Keep the wild woods ringing ;
Thrushes swell their speckled throats
In rivalry of singing ;
Blue-jays flaunt their azure coats,
Defiance at me flinging

Modest violets, group'd around,
Look up with mild surprise ;
Bearded pansies, velvet-crown'd,
Keep watch with eager eyes ;
Thus every creature on the ground, —
Thus every bird that flies.

Now the shadows creep apace,
Shadows without number ;
Now the red sun hides his face
In the mountains yonder ;
Now the stillness of the place
Steeps my soul in slumber.

SHELLEY'S GRAVE.

Shelley's grave lies by the city wall, in the "Strangers' Cemetery" at Rome. Three stately cypress trees keep guard around the foot. Only the poet's heart is here buried, the remainder of his body having been burned by his friend Byron on the shore of the Gulf of Spezia, where he was drowned July 8, 1822, aged thirty years. A plain marble slab, flat upon the ground, is all that marks the spot. The inscription is from Shakespeare's "Tempest":—

" Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange."

WHERE springing flowers
Greet falling showers,
And cypress branches wave,
In a southern clime,
At vesper chime,
I stood by Shelley's grave.

A pilgrim I,
From a northern sky,
A cold and distant clime ;
Two gifts I bore —
An offering poor,
And an offering sublime !

A faded flower ;
A spell of power —
Tender and strong and true ;
From a woman's heart
To the poet-heart —
I wonder if he knew ?

"O heart !" I said,
"Of the poet-dead,
Reclining here at rest ;
O soul !" said I,
"Of melody,
In the mansions of the blest !"

“ O soul ! ” I said,
“ Of the poet-dead,
In the blissful realms above,
Around thy clay,
With this simple spray,
I weave the spell of love ” —

A wind swept by
Through the cypress nigh,
And stirred the withered flower ;
“ From a woman’s heart
To the poet-heart —
And may the spell have power ! ”

A wind swept by
Through the cypress nigh,
And stirred the withered spray ;
It came at length,
With a gathered strength,
And bore it far away.

Ah ! then I knew
The charm was true,
And not in vain the flower ;
From a woman's heart
To the poet-heart
The spell of love had power !

Rome, August 22, 1878.

HATH ANY ONE SEEN MY LOVE?

HER forehead is white as the drifted snow ;
Her eyes are black as the ripened sloe ;
Her cheeks are touched with the sunset glow ;
Hath any one seen my love ?

Her hair is a river of gleaming gold ;
Her blood is a torrent, — well controll'd ;
Her form is the cast of a perfect mould ;
Hath any one seen my love ?

Her step is the step of the bounding roe ;
Her glance is the glance of the wounded doe ;
Her voice is musical, soft and low ;
Hath any one seen my love ?

With a purpose single, steadfast, true,
We seek each other the wide world through;
And she asks of all, — as I ask of you, —
Hath any one seen my love?

Lake of Como, July 27, 1878.

THE DIVERS.

"WHO will seek the pearl of Truth,
Hid beneath the waves of life?"
"I!" "And I!" cry Age, and Youth,
And Manly Prime. The air is rife —
All are eager for the strife.

Down into the seething wave
Sprang the Youth, without a care ;
Singing in a coral cave
Sat a maiden, passing fair —
Bound him with her yellow hair.

Next, with bosom all aflame,
Manly Prime, of bearing bold ;
But the weeds of Wealth and Fame
Seized him with relentless hold —
Held him, till his heart was cold.

Last of all, the hoary Sage
 Plunged,—an ancient volume found ;
Sophistries of musty age
 Quickly his attention bound,—
 And the pearl remained unfound.

Dieppe, June 10, 1878.

THE IDEAL.

THERE was never a picture painted,
 There was never a poem sung,
But the heart of the artist fainted
 And the poet's soul was wrung ;
There was never a grand conception
 In the veined marble wrought,
But the hour of its inception
 With bitterness was fraught ;
For each knew that his fond endeavor
 Though he strove with utmost might,
Must fail of its meaning ever,
 As darkness fails from light.

There are wondrous colors blending,
Which the world may never know ;
There are angel-faces bending,
But for me alone they glow ;
There are rapturous voices singing,
There are symphonies that roll --
In dreams I hear them ringing
Through the cloisters of my soul.
But my waking fond endeavor
Still these fleeting visions mock --
Like Prometheus, find I ever
But the vulture and the rock.

The Vatican, Rome, August 20, 1878.

THE GREENWOOD FAIRY.

A SONG OF THE BLACK FOREST.

MERRILY, merrily wakes the day,
Merrily lifts the dawn ;
The birds are singing,
The flowers are springing,
And merrily winds the horn.
The huntsman's horn is winding far
O'er grassy dell and wooded hill ;
He calls his hounds to the antlered war,
The king of the herd to kill.
But a fairy I
Of the merry greenwood,
And I mock the huntsman's skill !

The huntsman comes in his pride of skill,
He rideth a gallant steed ;
In raiment bright
Is he all bedight,
And girt for daring deed.
Merrily, merrily winds the horn
O'er wooded hill and grassy dell ;
And the gentle fay
Of the morning ray
Is chained by its echoing spell. '
Gayly the huntsman rides away,
And boasts of his deadly skill.

Triberg (Black Forest), July 20, 1878. '

THE MESSAGE.

LILY, white lily, and red, red rose,
Hither, come hither, and hie away ;
Go to my lady, this truth disclose
To my lady fair, and say,—
Nestle deep down in her shining hair,
Bend and whisper into her ear,—
Tell her I love her beyond compare,
That she is to me than life more dear ;
Tell her I love her, tell her I love her,
I love her, I love her beyond compare !

Lily, white lily, and red, red rose,
Hither, come hither, and hie away ;
Go to my lady, this truth disclose
To my lady fair, and say, —

That a red, red rosebud, blushing fair,
 Shall her answer bring that I long to hear ;
Tell her I love her beyond compare,
 That she is to me than life more dear ;
Tell her I love her, tell her I love her,
 I love her, I love her beyond compare !

AFLOAT.

WITHIN a mighty circle bound,
Whose central point am I ;
A waste of waters all around,
Above — a world of sky.

I mark the angry sun arise
Each morning from the main ;
I see him daily cross the skies
To meet the waves again.

Anon, like Aphrodite, born
Amid the sounding surge,
I watch the placid moon sail on,
And sink beneath the verge.

The glist'ning stars reflect in turn
Their glories in the deep ;
For me alone they seem to burn,
And watchful vigils keep.

The misty clouds above me lie,
And shade the watery plain ;
For me they spread their canopy,
Or melt in gentle rain.

The sighing zephyrs come and go,
To fill my flowing sail ;
For me they whisper soft and low,
Or swell the rising gale.

Swift flying-fish with sudden bound
Escape some danger nigh ;
The watchful sea-gulls circle round —
The nautilus sails by.

Around me unknown forms arise,
And spouting monsters sweep ;
All hail me with their wondering eyes,—
A welcome to the deep.

'Tis well — I'll track the stormy sea
With every sail unfurled ;
These all shall my companions be,
And this, my only world.

Gulf of Mexico, April 20, 1877.

SUNRISE ON THE PACIFIC.

ON the mountains, like battle-smoke, fold upon
fold,

Hover low the mists of morning ;
As pearls, hang the dew-drops on forest and
wold,

The flowers and trees adorning.

In the East, the dove-light of promise, in
gleams,

Is blushing warm and waking ;
In the West, phantom shadows of darkness
and dreams

Are fleeing fast and breaking.

On their hinges of amber, the gateways of
pear
Are high and wide unclosing ;
Glowing standards of crimson their wonders
unfurl,
Heaven's glories all disclosing.

Swift, arrowy lightnings encircle the earth,
The seas are flushed and gory ;
And from out the throes of that marvellous
birth
The god ascends in glory !

At the Golden Gate, Cal., Nov. 1, 1879.

ONLY.

ONLY a shell from the eddy and swirl
Of a pitiless sea ;
But hid in its bosom a precious pearl
Lay fair and free !

Only the song of a passing bird
Sped swiftly by ;
But a poet that fleeting music heard —
It sang for aye !

Only a waif on Life's shingle bare,
Cast up by sin ;
But the pearl and the music may both be there,
Hid deep within !

Firth of Clyde, May 22, 1878.

THE MINSTREL.

On viewing an old painting (artist unknown), in the Vatican collection, representing Christ in the garb of a minstrel, playing on a harp, and singing to the people.

LIGHTLY he touched his lyre of gold
To a melody sad, and sweet, and true ;
But who, or whence was the minstrel bold,
Or the name of that melody, no one knew.

He sang a weird and mystical rhyme
(While ever more softly the music played) ;
"I sing the anthem of Fleeting Time,
To the measure of Human Life," he said.

They tore the harp from his practised hand,
They staid the flow of that marvellous song ;
And, with discord ever on sea and land,
The lyre of Life repays the wrong !

Rome, August 21, 1878.

THE FISHERS' RETURN.

On the Gulf of Genoa, at evening twilight, the women gather on the shore, and by their songs direct the fishermen's return. As the boats approach, the men and women sing alternate parts, all joining in the chorus.

MELLOW and sweet
Are the songs that greet
The fishers' return in their bounding fleet ;
Than life more dear
To each listening ear
Comes the merry sound of their answering cheer ;
But ever I roam
O'er the salt sea-foam —
There is none to welcome or woo me home.

Cheerly and bright
To the fisherman's sight
Is the flickering gleam of his window-light ;
By a hearth well-swept,
In a room well-kept,
Now his prattling babes to his knees have crept ;
But never a ray
Illumes my way,
No home have I where children play.

Genoa, August 29, 1878.

TWO LIVES.

LOVERS were many, and vows were rife,
But never the knight of her fancy came;
And the fluttering hope of a maiden's life
Lay hidden and hushed as a thing of shame.

For the answering love of a bosom true,
And the prattle of children about his knee,
O God! how he hungered, no one knew,
For a wanderer over the earth was he.

L'ENVOI.

Where the moss-covered marbles coldly gleam,
And the storm-wind chanteth a sad refrain,
Low lieth the knight of the lady's dream
By the side of her whom he sought in vain.

Heidelberg Castle, July 17, 1878.

MY LOST LOVE.

“Souls are created in pairs.” — PLATO.

O LOVE, my lost love ! say, whither art thou
 roaming ?

O Love, my lost love ! prithee hearken to
 my cry ;

I have sought thee since the dawning ; soon
 the gray and misty gloaming

Will come sweeping coldly o’er us, and then
 love will fade and die.

O Love, my lost love ! doth never vision tell
 thee,

O Love, my lost love ! that thou art mine
 alone ?

Doth no song-bird woo thy waking, with this
magic strain to spell thee,
Or whispering wind at eventide my yearning
cry make known?

O Love, my lost love! I seek thee, and thee
only;

O Love, my lost love! on the land and on
the sea,

I still seek thee far and near, I still seek thee
sad and lonely;

Sweet love! where'er thou lingerest, oh, I
prithee come to me!

Lucerne, July 31, 1878.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

WHEN the morning wakes in glory,
And the sunbeams thrill the air ;
When the birds rehearse their story
Of His love and kindly care ;
When the trees in stately beauty
Greet the flowerets on the sod, —
As a child beside its father,
So I wander forth with God.

When the purple shadows hover,
And the shining planets roll,
He comes — as comes a lover —
To the casement of my soul.
I hear His whispered greeting,
I feel His kiss divine ;
And the heart of the great Creator
Beats responsive unto mine.

LIFE.

LIFE is a symphony, life is a song !

Strike the chords cheerily, sing it in tune ;
Spite of its misery, spite of its wrong,
There is melody still in the grand old rune.

Faint-hearted mariners, toss'd on the tide,

Lo ! the dawn brightens, the clouds disappear ;

Soon in the haven at rest shall ye ride,

And the sunlight of heaven shall banish
your fear.

Grief-stricken mourner, thy sorrow give o'er ;

Freed from earth's suff'ring, temptation, and
sin,

Where the curtains of death drape the ever-
green shore,
Thy loved one is waiting to welcome thee in.

Life is a symphony, life is a song !
Strike the chords cheerily, sing it in tune ;
Spite of its misery, spite of its wrong,
There is melody still in the grand old rune.

Naples, August 26, 1878.

THE FRUITS OF SORROW.

THE pearl in beauty's tresses set,
To secret anguish owes its birth ;
The gems which grace the coronet,
Were born amid the throes of earth.

The attar which the rose distils
Proclaims the flower's sure decay ;
The forest songster ever trills
Most sweetly on his dying day.

The cruel axe must gash the wood
Before the healing gums may flow ;
And all of wise, or fair, or good,
Is sequent to some hidden woe.

WHEN WHISP'RING ZEPHYRS WOO THE
PINE.

WHEN whisp'ring zephyrs woo the pine,
And wake to life the blushing Spring ;
When droops the trailing eglantine,
And plovers pipe, and linnets sing ;

When cloy'd with sweets the drowsy bee
Forgets the roses in his way ;
When robins build in ev'ry tree,
And swallows weave their web of play ;

When glow the fruit trees wrapt in bloom,
And daisies lift their timid eyes ;
When violets yield their sweet perfume
As incense to the bending skies ;

When shining glow-worms haste to light
 Their lanterns, in the dewy eve ;
When artful spiders, through the night,
 With care their spangled meshes weave ;

When crickets chirp on ev'ry hearth,
 And sparrows twitter in the caves ;
When wanton squirrels, in their mirth,
 Play hide-and-seek amid the leaves ;

All nature, thrill'd with happy life,
 Proclaims aloud, through field and flood—
With tongues diverse, in friendly strife,
 A GOD THERE IS, AND HE IS GOOD !

FLORAL COURTSHIP.

I PICKED my love a posy bright
Of roses red, and lilies white,
Of mistletoe, and kingly yew : —
But she returned me only rue.

I picked my love a posy bright
Of Gilcad's balm, and shade of night ;
She sent me ivy, eglantine,
Forget-me-not, and columbine.

Saratoga, August 10, 1877.

LOVE LONGEST LIVES IN FREEDOM.

A LOVER I had who said to me —
"We will love for aye, but for aye be free —
True love, in bondage, may never agree —
Love longest lives in freedom!"

A bird he brought me of matchless song,
Which strove for its liberty all day long,
And carolled forever this pæan strong —
"Love longest lives in freedom!"

I loosed the bird — upon wings of gold
It sped far away o'er the distant wold,
And its parting message merrily roll'd —
"Love longest lives in freedom!"

My lover stayed while my youth was bright—
Like the bird, he fled with its waning light ;
Now sadly I sigh through the weary night —
 “ *Love longest lives in freedom!* ”

Leadville, Col., May 15, 1879.

THE ESCAPE.

As the mantle of night hides the slumbering
earth,

Till withdrawn by the sunlight of Heaven,
So in life I lay hid ; so in jubilant mirth
I at last was unveiled to that marvellous birth
Called *Death*, — which in mercy is given !

Oh ! I merrily laughed when I found I was free
From the net which Mortality weaves ;
It lay where it fell, 'neath a wide-spreading
tree,
And I staid scarce a moment, in tremulous
glee,

To cover it lightly with leaves.

Then I fashioned a boat from the folds of a rose ;
A pine-needle served for a mast ;
The sails were of gossamer ; cordage of those
Light threads which the pods of the milk-weed
disclose,
When their seeds to the zephyrs are cast.

And I sailed far away on the wings of the
wind,
Far out toward the beautiful West ;
But the shard that I left, 'neath the oak tree
reclined,
Slept on — yet I cared not, nor looked I behind,
For I *scorned* what I lately caress'd.

Oakland, Cal., December 20, 1879.

LIVE IT DOWN.

SHOULD envy seek to mar thy fame,

Live it down ;

Should malice blacken thy good name,

Live it down ;

Should all the hosts of Hell unite

To whelm thee 'neath their vengeful spite,

And paint thee with the hues of night,

Live it down, live it down.

Though lost to thee be ev'ry friend,

Live it down ;

The truth will conquer in the end,

Live it down ;

As morning comes, though night be long,
As calm succeeds the tempest strong,
So right shall triumph over wrong,
 Live it down, live it down.

San Francisco, September 20, 1880.

THE INNER LIFE.

I MINGLE with the trivial crowd,
The gayest of the gay ;
With those who laugh I laugh aloud ;
I play with those who play.

But when at night I lonely lie,
And commune with my heart,
I feel 'tis all a mockery —
I only play a part.

My boon companions may not know
The secret of my breast ;
Enough for them the idle flow
Of merriment and jest.

But deep within my hidden soul
 There lies a holy place,
Where wanton footstep fears to stroll,
 And Folly veils her face.

OUR FATHER.

"OUR Father who in Heaven art,
Forever hallowed be Thy name !
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
In Heaven, and on earth the same !

"Give me my bread from day to day ;
Forgive the evil I have wrought ;
Teach me with love my foes to pay,
And cleanse from sin my inmost thought !

"Protect me through the gloomy night ;
Enfold me in Thine arms of love ;
Oh, guide my tott'ring steps aright,
And lead me to Thy home above !"

Fond Memory backward wings her flight,
And turns the page of time, to see
A little child repeat at night
His prayer, before a mother's knee.

PLATONIC PHILOSOPHY.

Plato advocated the theory that each soul, male or female, is but the half of a perfect whole, doomed to wander in solitude and isolation through an infinity of successive existences, until it shall finally meet and unite with its own proper, divinely-appointed companion.

By the system Platonic
(Tho' it seems rather comic)
Each soul is a half cut asunder by fate ;
Condemned to go sighing,
And crying, and prying,
Until, by some chance, it shall meet with its
mate.

If you halve a tomato,
A pear, or potato,
The halves will match neatly again when they're
joined ;

But if you should grapple
Either one to an apple,
The point of connection were surely defined.

Apart from me riven
By cruel fate driven,
My other half wanders alone o'er the earth;
If any should meet her
I wish they would greet her
And say that I've sought her in vain from my
birth.

BILLIARDS INTENSIFIED.

COULD I from Nature take the cue
That sets the spheres in play,
I'd send those ivories spinning through
Each other, on their table blue,
In a promiscuous way.

And when, at last, I left my place
Amid the gaping crowd,
By power unseen shot into space,
I'd strike the pale moon in the face,
And *carom* on a cloud!

Chicago, December 10, 1880.

FALLING LEAVES.

THEY are falling, falling, falling,
In an undulating flow ;
They are rippling, rippling, rippling
Waves of color as they go ;
They are sailing, sailing, sailing,
And the fairy sunlight weaves
A web of magic beauty
Round the falling of the leaves !

They are falling, falling, falling,
In a chorus soft and low ;
They are floating, floating, floating,
On its rhythm to and fro ;

They are circling, circling, circling,
Each a mystic measure weaves,
Oh ! my soul is filled with music
From the falling of the leaves.

Nevada City, Cal., Nov. 20, 1879.

BUBBLES.

At the door of a farm-house, on the field of Waterloo, an old and battered soldier sat blowing soap-bubbles from a clay pipe. I found he was demented, and that this was his constant amusement. "My friend," said I, "surely yours is but a frivolous employment on the scene of such great deeds." "*Pardon, monsieur,*" he answered, "*c'est la même chose.*"

"Hour by hour, and day by day,
Bubbles I blow from a pipe of clay;
And ever I watch them glimmer and glow,
Gleam and glisten, expand and grow,
As I slowly, softly, steadily blow —
Till they vanish in air, or float away!"

"Prithee, my friend, from day to day,
Why spend your life in such frivolous way?
While every other pursues some aim —
Or wealth, or power, or joy, or fame, —"
"Just so," quoth he, "and I do the same; —
Bubbles I blow from a pipe of clay!"

Brussels, July 4, 1878.

THE SUMMONS.

CAME there a maiden at morning-ray,
Lithe and ruddy, and fair to see ;
"Maiden, I come."—She answered, "Nay,
I seek for another, and not for thee."

Came there a spectre at close of day,
Lean and ghastly and grim to see ;
"The man thou seekest hath gone away."—
"Get ready, friend—I am come for *thee!*"

Lucerne, July 31, 1878.

RETROSPECTION.

A SACRED trust to me was given —
An angel-cherub, wondrous fair,
With clustering gems of hope and heaven
Entangled in its shining hair.
It came to me at morning-ray :
I named that lovely babe — *To-day!*

I loved the child ; yet wilfully,
By some unholy power possessed,
Still wrought it wrong. I watched it die
When died the sunlight in the West.
Too late, with passionate remorse
I sorrow o'er its pallid corse !

Rome, August 27, 1878

THE SCHOOL OF WISDOM.

THE rosary hung on Wisdom's hands,
With ready tongue Youth glibly tells ;
But faltering Manhood slowly spells,
And Age — abashed — in silence stands.

Cologne, July 5, 1878.

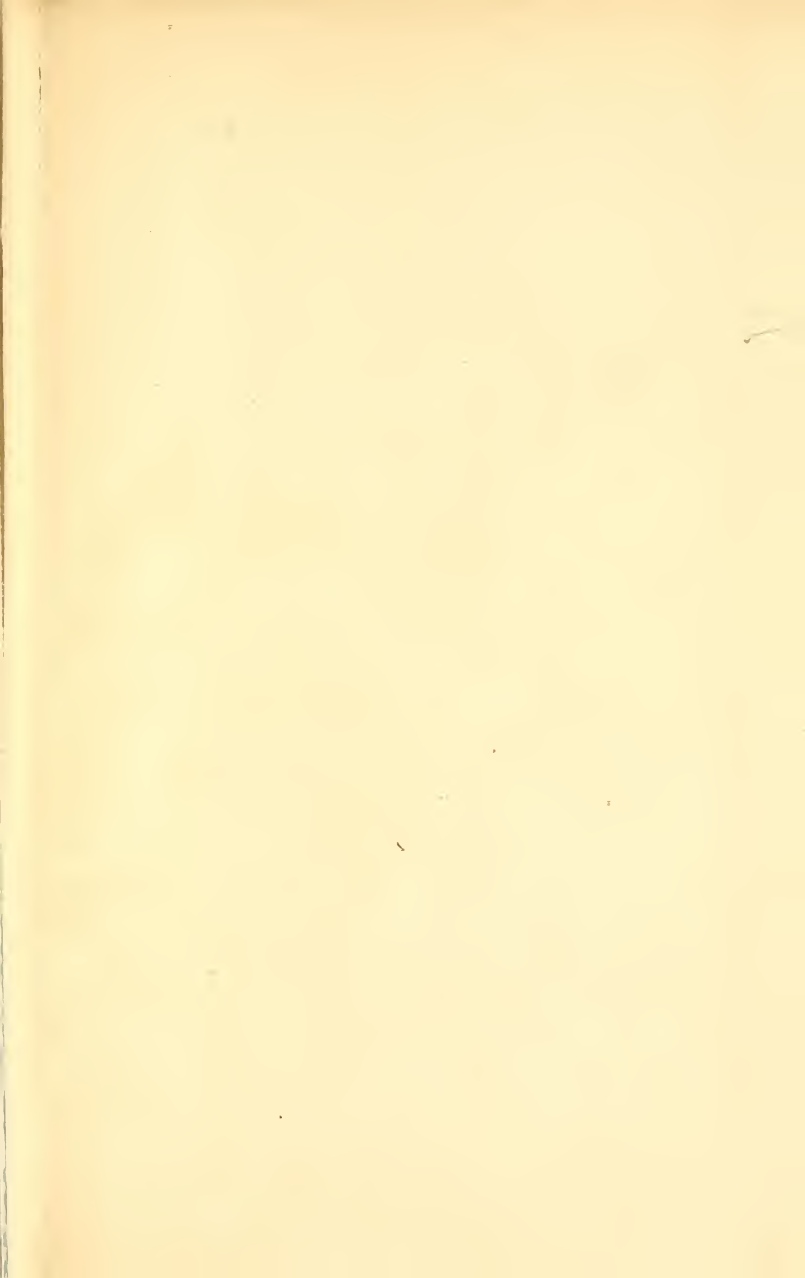
SOON OR LATE.

SOON or late the time will come,
Borne upon the flying years,
When, above my silent tomb,
Birds will sing and bees will hum,
Grasses wave and flowers bloom,
Dews distil in pearly tears.

Soon or late, in cold review,
Men will scan my resting place,
Canvass every fault anew,—
“Follies many, virtues few;”
Care I little, false or true,
So they add — “He loved his race.”

Pompeii, August 25, 1878





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